formal permission for closure of textile mills because the units are not able to provide terminal benefits to workers as per existing law;

(b) whether in view of this Gujarat Government has requested the Central Government for soft loans from the Rehabilitation Fund to the units which are closed at present; and

(c) if so, what is Government's reaction there to and whether other avenues like Advance Plan Assistance can be utilised for this purpose?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR): (a) The Government of Gujarat have stated that millwoners are reluctant to apply for formal closure under Section 25 (o) of the Industrial Disputes' Act, 1947 as this would involve immediate liability for payment of terminal benefits.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The Union Government feel that it may not be possible to provide funds as soft loans out of the Textile Workers' Rehabilitation Fund Scheme for paying terminal benefits to the workers. The possibility of Advance Plan Assistance can be considered for this purpose, if a request to that effect is received.

Trade Deficit

1809. SHRI GHULAM RASOOL MATTO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) what was the trade deficit during the years 1985-86 and 1986-87; and

(b) what is the estimated trade deficit for the year 1987-88 and what concrete steps have been taken by the Central Government to narrow down the trade deficit?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. R. DAS MUNSHI): (a) According to the provisional figures, India's trade deficit during 1986-87 was Rs. 751.51 crores as compared to the provisional trade deficit of Rs. 7950.91 crores during 1985-86. It may be mentioned that the trade deficit during 1985-86 as per the revised figures works out to Rs. 8754.00 crores.

(b) It is difficult to estimate precisely the trade deficit for 1987-88 at this stage. A series of initiatives have been taken by the Government to promote exports. These are designed to generate surpluses for exports to induce the production of goods contemporary in technology and competitive in prices and to make the exports profitable. Simultaneously the Government has also initiated a series of steps to promote efficient import substitution, particularly in the sphere of bulk import.

Opening of Regional Passport Offices in Andhra Pradesh

1810. SHRI TALARI MANOHAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to open Regional Passport Offices in Andhra Pradesh; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH): (a) No, Sir. There is no proposal under consideration to open additional Regional Passport Offices in Andhra Pradesh apart from the existing Regional Passport Office in Hyderabad.

(b) For the past few years, the Government has been following the principle of having one Passport Office in each State unless the number of passport applications from that State is too small which would not justify expenditure on opening a Passport Office in that State.